

Virginia Department of Social Services

CHOOSING QUALITY CHILD CARE

BUILDING VIRGINIA'S FUTURE, CHILD BY CHILD, DAY BY DAY



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Child Care Arrangements: What's the Right Decision?.....	3
Types of Child Care.....	4
Summary of Child Care in Virginia	5
What to Look for in a Child Care Setting	6
Child Care Partnership	7
How Parents Can Support Their Child.....	7
Information to Give Providers.....	7
What to Expect from the Provider	7
Monitoring	8
FORMS AND CHECKLISTS	9
Telephone Interview Form.....	13
On-Site Interview Form	15
Tour of the Child Care Setting Checklist	21
Provider Ratings.....	23
Provider's Report Card	25
Emergency Contact information Form.....	27
Additional Resources	29
NOTES	31





CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS: WHAT'S THE RIGHT DECISION?

Child care is a major decision as well as a major investment in a child's future. The majority of parents in Virginia must work outside the home, and, while there are many resources available, it is the parents' responsibility to find quality child care that meets the needs of their child and fits within their budget. This is not an easy task, and we thank you for taking the time to learn more about quality child care in Virginia.

Research shows us that by three years of age, a child's brain develops about 90 percent of its capacity. External child care is most often used for children between the ages of birth through four years old, when the majority of the brain is developing. (Source: "Early Brain Development and Child Care," [Healthy Child Care America](#) (Vol. 3, No. 1, January 1999), National Child Care Information Center, www.nccic.org.)

This publication is intended to provide guidance to assist those who must select other individuals to care for their child or children. High-quality child care is not universal, so it is essential to be aware of the multitude of considerations parents should research when looking for the best facility for their child. Some factors to consider include the environment, staff-to-child ratios, interaction and relationship-building, responsiveness and education level of the staff, discipline practices, educational programming, daily routines, meals, and accessibility. Parents have the power to give their child a fair advantage in life by enrolling him/her in a quality early care and education program.

Children are our most precious responsibility, and our decisions about them today will affect tomorrow's leaders. It is worth our time as parents to learn how to identify a quality child care program and use this information to select the best facility that will help our children reach their optimum potential. Once a child care program is selected, parents need to implement strategies for staying informed about what is happening while their children are in the care of others.

The Virginia Department of Social Services' Division of Child Care and Development hopes that this publication is informative and helpful to parents in their search for quality child care and contributes to positive decisions that nurture their child's development. For more information and links to other resources, please visit our Web site at www.dss.virginia.gov and select "Children" on the left side of the page, and then select "Child Care".

WHAT IS CONSIDERED CHILD CARE IN VIRGINIA?

A child care program in Virginia provides supervision and protection for a child who is younger than 13 years old. The program operates on a regular basis for periods that are less than twenty-four hours and represents an agreement between a parent or guardian and either a person or organization. Parents may choose from several types of child care arrangements, based on the child's age, development, personality, interests, etc. The general categories of care are in-home care and out-of-home care in a private home or a center.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Not all child care is regulated. Virginia law defines the types of child care that are subject to regulation; regulated facilities can include both licensed and unlicensed programs.

The types of child care in Virginia include the following:

Center-based Child Care	Family-based Child Care
• Licensed Child Day Center	• Licensed Family Day Home
• Unlicensed Child Day Center	• Voluntarily Registered or Local Ordinance Family Day Home
• Religiously-Exempt Child Day Center	• Family Day Home Approved by a Family Day System
• Certified Preschool System	
• Unregulated Child Day Center	• Unregulated Family Day Home

The allowed capacity, requirements, and level of monitoring vary among regulated care. There are no requirements for unregulated care; many family day homes are not monitored or regulated by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS).

In Virginia, a family day home provider must be licensed if she provides care in her home for more than five children who are less than 13 years old, in addition to her own children or other children who reside in the home. Additionally, a family day home must be licensed if the provider provides care in her home for more than four children who are less than two years of age, including her own children or children who reside in the home. Similarly, all child care centers must be licensed unless they are exempt from licensure in accordance with the law.



TYPES OF CHILD CARE

Child care settings in Virginia are usually one of the following:

CENTERS

- **A licensed child day center** provides care for two or more children in a setting other than a private home or for 13 or more children at any other location (e.g., private residence, commercial establishment). Centers must comply with the requirements set by the Child Day Care Council and enforced by VDSS. These requirements are found on the VDSS Web site at www.dss.virginia.gov and in the publication entitled *Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers*.

- **An unlicensed child day center** provides care for two or more children in a setting other than a private home and is not required by the *Code of Virginia* to be licensed. **Religiously exempt** programs and **certified preschools** are the two types of unlicensed care. While these programs are not required to be licensed, they are required to meet specific guidelines, and they are periodically monitored. These exemption guidelines and requirements are identified in the *Religiously Exempt Child Day Centers Booklet* located on the VDSS Web site at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/search/unlicensed.cgi>.

- **An unregulated child day center** provides care for two or more children in a setting other than a private home and is not required by the *Code of Virginia* to be licensed, religiously exempt, or certified. Examples of unlicensed centers would be certain short-term programs such as some camps and some recreation programs. Whether short-term programs must be licensed depends on factors such as the total amount of time they operate each year or the total amount of time a child is allowed to attend.

PRIVATE HOMES

- **A licensed family day home** provides care for up to 12 children, in addition to the provider's own children or children residing in the home, in a private home that is licensed by VDSS. These homes must maintain compliance with the *Minimum Standards for Licensed Family Day Homes*, which can be found at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/dayhome.html>.
- **A voluntarily registered family day home** is a home that can serve up to five children, in addition to the provider's own children or children residing in the home, and has registered with VDSS or an organization that is under contract with VDSS. These homes must comply with requirements contained in *Voluntary Registration of Family*



Day Homes: Requirements for Providers. A small sample of these homes is monitored by the contract agencies and VDSS. A listing of these agencies and areas served can be found at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/contractagency.html>.

- **A family day system home** provides child care to no more than twelve children, in addition to the provider's own children or children residing in the home. It is approved and monitored by an agency licensed by the state. The family day system and its homes must comply with the requirements contained in the *Minimum Standards for Licensed Family Day Care Systems*, which can be found at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/lcdc.html>.
- **An unregulated family day home** is not inspected by the state or its designee. It can legally provide care for no more than five children, in addition to the provider's own children or children residing in the home, or no more than four children under the age of two, including the provider's own children or children residing in the home, at any one time. Homes that exceed capacity are operating illegally.

IN-HOME CHILD CARE

- **In-Home child care** takes place when a provider cares for a child in the child's own home. This may be a live-in arrangement or an arrangement where the person provides care for part of the day. There are no licensing regulations for this type of care. The person may or may not have credentials or formal training in early childhood education. As the employer, the parent is responsible for finding someone who matches their requirements.

For all types of child care, the Division of Licensing Programs at VDSS will assist in screening child care programs by providing licensure information. Inspection reports may be reviewed online at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/search/licensed.cgi>.



SUMMARY OF CHILD CARE IN VIRGINIA

Type	Licensed? or Regulated?	Capacity	Monitoring	Agency Handling Complaint Investigations
Licensed Child Day Center	Licensed	2 or more at a setting other than private residence; at least 13 or more if at a private residence	VDSS – twice a year	VDSS
Unlicensed Child Day Center	N/A	2 or more	None	Not Applicable
Religiously Exempt Center	Licensed	2 or more	VDSS – once a year, or as needed	VDSS
Certified Preschool	Regulated	N/A	VDSS	VDSS
Unregulated Child Day Center	N/A	2 or more	None	N/A
Licensed Family Day Home	Licensed	Maximum 12	VDSS – twice a year	VDSS
Voluntarily Registered Family Day Home	Regulated	Maximum 5	VDSS Approved Contract Agency randomly checks 10% of homes not on USDA Food Program; VDSS randomly checks 20% of all	VDSS and Contract Agency
Family Day Home System *	Licensed	Maximum 12	VDSS monitors System – twice a year System monitors homes – quarterly	VDSS for System System for homes
Unregulated Family Day Home	N/A	Maximum 5	None	Not Applicable
Child's Home	N/A	Total resident children	None	Not Applicable

*System is licensed; homes are regulated.

NOTE: Every child in Virginia is protected by law against child abuse and neglect. Allegations of abuse and neglect are investigated by local departments of social services. The Child Protective Services Hotline number is **1-800-552-7096**.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CHILD CARE SETTING

- ✓ Provider has training in child development and experience in the group care of children;
- ✓ Environment is safe, clean, and designed to promote learning and growth;
- ✓ Provider is nurturing and encourages a variety of learning experiences that are age- and stage-appropriate;
- ✓ Health practices are implemented and nutritious meals and snacks are served;
- ✓ Program is responsive to the children's and families' needs;
- ✓ Program solicits family involvement.

STEP 1: GETTING STARTED

Once it has been determined what type of care is needed, it is wise to research the names of potential providers to contact.

To obtain names of potential providers, contact any of the following:

- Virginia Department of Social Services. A directory of regulated and licensed providers is available in printed form by calling 1-800-543-7545. The directory is also available on the VDSS Web site at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/index.html>.
- Virginia Statewide Human Services Information and Referral System at the new information number at 2-1-1.
- Virginia Child Care Resource & Referral Network at 1-866-481-1913. For the local Child Care Resource and Referral agency, please call toll free at 1-800-451-1501.
- Parents of young children
- Friends, neighbors, and people at places of worship
- School teachers
- People working in child care

After a list of possible providers is identified, it may be helpful to rank the choices based on the most favorable to the least favorable locations. Making the initial contact is the next step, and using the *Telephone Interview* form, found at the back of this publication, will help determine which providers should be considered for an in-person interview.

Before meeting with potential providers, consider using the checklist entitled *Provider Characteristics for Quality Child Care*. This identifies some desirable characteristics for child care providers and is available at the back of this publication and on the [VDSS Web site](#).

STEP 2: GATHERING INFORMATION

There are several methods to assist in making a child care decision. Initial contact should be brief; the goal is to narrow the list to likely candidates. When it appears that a suitable provider has been found, arrange an on-site interview. Several providers should be contacted before scheduling these interviews.

Recommended methods for gathering information about the provider include the following:

- a telephone interview;
- a personal interview with the provider; and
- a tour of the child care setting.

Several visits to the child care program are recommended before making a selection. The following types of visits are recommended:

- without the child;
- with the child and the provider, and
- with the child, the provider, and the other children in care.

These visits will provide an opportunity to discuss issues with the provider as well as to observe and evaluate the setting and interactions. Depending on his/her age, the child may be able to help with the decision based upon his/her "evaluation" of the setting.

Sample questions for the telephone interview, interview with the provider, and tour of the child care setting are provided at the end of this publication.

It is important that both the parents and the child(ren) spend a sufficient amount of time at the program before making a decision. A child needs an opportunity to get acquainted, and parents need an opportunity to see how the child responds to the provider, the program, and the other children.

- Ask to tour the center/home and to observe the program in action.
- Look around all parts of the center/home, e.g., care and napping rooms, playground, bathrooms, diapering areas, stairs, entrances, etc.



CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP

For a successful adjustment to the program, it is crucial that families and providers work together. Open communication between parents and the provider is essential. It is important that they agree on how to handle issues such as discipline, daily schedules, nutrition, and safety. Everyone benefits when information is shared.

HOW PARENTS CAN SUPPORT THEIR CHILD

Both the child and the provider need support. Parents should explain to the child before the first day that he/she will be staying with Mrs. Jones while they are working, attending class, etc. Explain what activities he/she will be doing. The child should know that the parent can be reached during the day. For a young child who is not able to talk about how he/she feels or is not able to comprehend what the parent is saying, it is even more important to talk about his/her feelings and give reassurance that Mrs. Jones is a wonderful person who can be trusted.

Help make this an easy transition for the child. If possible, attendance in the program should be gradual. The child's first day should be short, and then gradually increase the time. Parents should plan to stay a little longer in the mornings and afternoons to help the child make the adjustment and to provide/receive information from the provider. The child will benefit from extra attention during this transitional time.

There are several things that will help the child feel secure with the new program:

1. Develop and maintain a good relationship with the provider.
2. Make drop-off and pick-up times happy times.
3. Look for cues that the child is happy with the decision.
4. Note any behavior changes, especially those that are severe or continue.

If there are suspicions that something is not right at the center/home, talk to the child about it, and always let him know that the door is open to discuss child care arrangements.

INFORMATION TO GIVE PROVIDERS

The attached [Emergency Contact Information](#) form included herein may be used to give the provider information about the child. Sometimes this information changes from day to day. The provider should ALWAYS have the most up-to-date information about the child.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE PROVIDER

In addition to doing their part, parents should expect that a provider will do his/her part as well. At a minimum, the provider is expected to fulfill the terms of the contract, but this usually only covers a very small part of what occurs on a daily basis. Consequently, there will be additional expectations over and above those outlined in the contract.

The provider should inform parents about significant occurrences. Examples include injuries; changes in napping, eating, toileting, disposition; child's likes and dislikes; and issues with other children, including contagious illnesses affecting other children, so parents will be attentive to possible symptoms in their child. Providers should share new child care events, e.g., changes in staff, new activities, and schedule changes.

The provider should meet the child's basic needs during the period of time the child is in her care. Parents will know if this is happening by observing whether or not a clean and safe environment is being maintained, nutritious meals and snacks are served, and children are encouraged to learn and grow. Parents should expect the provider to be pleasant to both parents and children and both should feel welcome at the child care program. As the parent-provider relationship matures, it should begin to feel like a friendship.



MONITORING

Once a decision is made, the job is not over. It is the parent's responsibility to continuously monitor the child care arrangements. It is important to make some unexpected visits, as well as occasionally to stay a little longer when the child is dropped-off and picked-up. Be considerate of the activity that is occurring when arriving by trying to minimize the interruption. (Staying out of sight of your child and observing quietly may help curtail a disruption.) Child care providers should feel perfectly comfortable with parents stopping by at any time.

Because needs and circumstances change, parents should re-evaluate the program every three to six months and at any other time there are concerns. The areas to examine include the following:

1. the relationship between the provider and the children
2. the relationship between parent and provider
3. the discipline practices
4. the educational/activity program
5. the nutritional program
6. the physical setting
7. the playground

A sample [Provider's Report Card](#) is provided at the end of this publication.





FORMS AND CHECKLISTS

The next several pages include forms and checklists to be used in locating and evaluating child care for your child. It may be helpful to copy these information sheets and use them while interviewing potential providers. We suggest that the originals be retained in this publication for your future use.





PROVIDER CHARACTERISTICS FOR QUALITY CHILD CARE

USING THIS INFORMATION

From time to time we've been asked to define the characteristics of a provider who offers quality child care. That is a difficult question. We asked an experienced community college faculty member with years of experience teaching early care and education students, as well as years of observing providers at various levels of education and experience, to help define the characteristics. These suggested characteristics are categorized and detailed in the following sections: physical, mental and health; social; knowledge; emotional; and general.

The resulting list may be used by the following people:

- Persons considering a career in child care and development – to see how well they match the profile, and how committed they are to the ongoing professional study needed to master and practice the knowledge required
- Supervisors who are evaluating job applicants for child care and development positions
- Parents who may be selecting a child care provider
- Job counselors, educators, and trainers who are called upon to counsel persons considering a career in child care

In using the information for these purposes, it is important to distinguish between *knowledge-based characteristics*, which can be changed with training and experience, and *personality or values characteristics*, which are not as likely to change in response to training. Similarly, it is important to evaluate how quickly the most critical deficiencies in knowledge and ability can reasonably be overcome through training and education.



PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS

- Maintains good health
- Has a high energy level; is very active
- Does not use alcohol, drugs, or take medication that will affect responsiveness to children
- Can lift children weighing up to 50 pounds
- Can get on the floor with children and get up quickly
- Can run and play with children in active play
- Is attentive and always alert to the children and what they are doing in the environment
- Can work with and supervise children doing different things at the same time
- Is personally clean and appropriately groomed

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Enjoys working with children and their families
- Respects children as individuals
- Respects parents as the primary persons in the lives of their children
- Likes to be in an active, constantly changing environment where the needs of children and their families come first
- Has good communications skills, both verbal and non-verbal. Speaks clearly in English, listens to children and parents, does not use negative words or body language.
- Is courteous, consistent, and positive in interactions with children and parents
- Is considerate of others
- Is alert and sensitive to others' needs and uses this sensitivity to anticipate what might happen in given situations
- Is tolerant and appreciates the differences in others' skills, appearances, interests, cultures, and personalities
- Is honest in both monetary and non-monetary matters
- Has a keen sense of responsibility and personal accountability
- Is intellectually curious
- Enjoys learning and helping others to learn and solve problems



KNOWLEDGE CHARACTERISTICS

- Can read and write English at least on an eighth grade level
- Has broad general knowledge and information
- Has an understanding of child growth and development
- Is well organized and efficient
- Can locate and use resources creatively
- Can plan an age-appropriate program for the children in care
- Can observe and evaluate children's progress and problems
- Can make referrals to appropriate resources as needed
- Understands basic behavioral guidance techniques, e.g., redirection, positive guidance, role-modeling, etc.
- Can assist children with learning acceptable behavior and dealing with the logical consequences of unacceptable behavior
- Understands the principles of program planning
- Understands the need for transitions and how to incorporate them successfully into the day-to-day activities of working with children
- Can plan an environment that stimulates children to be active learners
- Is creative in approaches to problem-solving
- Understands healthy nutrition and the nutritional needs of children
- Knows first aid and rescue breathing or CPR
- Can maintain necessary files and records

EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Is emotionally stable
- Is flexible
- Is warm and affectionate
- Is patient
- Is caring and calm, even in trying situations
- Can control temper
- Has healthy self-esteem
- Can objectively evaluate own performance and takes responsibility for improving performance based on feedback and self-appraisal
- Can deal with conflict openly, comfortably and constructively, without becoming upset, vengeful or defensive

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Knows and practices professional ethics
- Keeps information confidential
- Is reliable and available when services are needed and expected and makes arrangements with all necessary parties for time away from responsibilities
- Is interested in ongoing professional development



TELEPHONE INTERVIEW FORM

DATE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____

1. Do you now have or will you have openings on _____
 (date you will need care)

for my child(ren)? _____
 (ages of children)

2. Are you available to keep my child(ren) on _____
 (days of the week you need care)

from? _____
 (hours needed)

3. What would be the cost for this care? _____

4. What does this include? _____

5. Are there any other costs? _____

6. What is the total number of children for whom you currently provide care? _____

7. What are the ages and genders of the children who would be in my child(ren)'s classroom(s) or in care in the home?

(age)

(gender)

8. Do you or any person in the child care setting smoke? Yes ☐ No ☐

9. Do you have any pets? Yes ☐ No ☐

10. If yes, what are the types of animals and where are they during the hours you care for children?

(# of animals)

(location during care)

11. What would be the routine and the types of activities for my child(ren)? _____

12. What are your discipline practices? _____

13. Are you licensed, registered, or exempt from licensure? _____

My impression of the provider: _____

Note: If your child requires special care, you should inquire about whether the provider is willing and capable of providing the necessary special care.



ON-SITE INTERVIEW FORM

Program/provider name: _____

Program/provider address: _____

Interview date and time: _____

Directions: _____ (date) _____ (time)

_____**I. PROGRAM**

1. What values and beliefs guide the child care program and its staff?

Things to consider:

2. Is the program centered on the children's needs? Yes ☐ No ☐3. Is the provider concerned about safety? Yes ☐ No ☐4. Are children valued and encouraged? Yes ☐ No ☐

5. What expectations would this program have of my child (e.g., behavior, level of functioning, participation)?

6. What group would my child be in and what is that group's routine?

7. What type of discipline do you use?

8. How frequently are children disciplined?

9. What type of behavior warrants discipline?

_____

ON-SITE INTERVIEW FORM

10. Describe the educational activity part of your program.

11. Does your program have any special components?

Examples of special components may include

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. Religious or cultural focus | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Recreation activities such as dance or gymnastics | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Computer classes | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Scouts | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

II. STAFF

COVERAGE:

12. How many children are you responsible for? _____

13. What is the schedule for the staff?

(In centers, there will be different staff throughout the work day because most centers are open at least 12 hours a day.)

14. What is your plan when the person ordinarily responsible for caring for my child is absent?

15. Is it likely that my child will have the same provider for at least a year? Yes ☐ No ☐

16. How long has the provider been in operation? _____

17. For centers: How long has the person who will be my child's teacher been with your program? _____
(length of time with program)

18. Is the staff turnover low? Yes ☐ No ☐

19. How often does a teacher leave? _____

20. For centers: How frequently do children change classes?

(High staff turnover is harmful. It discourages children from forming trusting and secure relationships.)



ON-SITE INTERVIEW FORM**QUALIFICATIONS:**

21. Generally, what is the educational background of the child care staff and particularly those who will work with my child?

22. Generally, what experience does the staff have working with children and particularly those who will work with my child?

23. Have the necessary criminal background checks been conducted on all persons directly involved with the children? Yes ☐ No ☐

(It is good practice, and in some cases required by regulations, to require criminal records checks, Child Protective Services Central Registry checks, and TB tests.)

24. Is someone always present who is certified in First Aid Yes ☐ No ☐

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) Yes ☐ No ☐

Rescue Breathing Yes ☐ No ☐

25. Tell me about your staff development plan.

26. What kind of orientation does staff receive?

27. Are child care staff required to attend some training every year to improve child care skills? Yes ☐ No ☐

(Try to get a sense of whether the provider supports education and training of staff.)



ON-SITE INTERVIEW FORM**III. PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

28. What are approved ways parents can be involved in the program?

29. How are parents kept informed of and involved in their children's learning experiences?

30. Are parents encouraged to visit the program?

Yes ☐No ☐

(Note: Section § 63.2-1813 of the *Code of Virginia* guarantees parents or guardians the right to access the center/home whenever their children are in care, unless a court has ordered otherwise.)

31. What are my responsibilities in addition to financial obligations?

IV. RULES

32. What are the rules children and parents must abide by?

(Too many rules may be a sign of an overly controlled environment or may make it difficult for your child to earn approval and success. Too few rules may indicate insufficient planning or structure.)

33. What is your policy on ill children?

34. Are pets allowed at the facility?

Yes ☐No ☐

35. If allowed, what animals currently reside at the facility? _____

36. Are all required immunizations current?

Yes ☐No ☐

37. Are there visitors in your center/home during the hours children are being cared for?

Yes ☐No ☐

38. If so, please explain who and why they are there and how often they visit?



ON-SITE INTERVIEW FORM

V. MEDICATION

39. What is your policy on giving prescription and non-prescription medications to children in your care?

40. Where are medications kept?

(Medications should be kept out of reach of children.)

VI. HEALTH AND SAFETY

41. What is your plan for handling emergencies?

42. Are there any firearms or weapons on the premises? Yes ☐ No ☐

43. If so, are they kept locked and out of reach of children? Yes ☐ No ☐

44. Do you transport children? Yes ☐ No ☐

45. If so, do you use appropriate seat belts and car seats for each child? Yes ☐ No ☐

VII. BUSINESS

46. How long have you been in business? _____

47. Do you have any plans for closing your business or retiring? Yes ☐ No ☐

(This is a particularly important question for family day homes.)

48. What are the hours of operation? _____

49. What days/weeks will the program be closed? _____

50. Are you regulated or licensed by the state? Yes ☐ No ☐

Regulated Yes ☐ No ☐ Licensed Yes ☐ No ☐

51. If so, what is the name of the licensing inspector? _____

52. What organizations have you been certified/accredited by?



ON-SITE INTERVIEW FORM

VIII. COSTS

53. What is the charge for care? _____
(Sometimes there is a sliding fee scale.)

54. What does it include?

55. Are there additional charges for things like transportation or field trips? Yes ☐ No ☐

56. What is the method of payment (cash, check; due date)? Cash Yes ☐ No ☐

Check Yes ☐ No ☐

Due date _____

57. In January of each year, will you provide me with a statement of the total amount of money I have paid you for the previous year and your federal identification number? Yes ☐ No ☐

58. Is there a minimum enrollment period? Yes ☐ No ☐
(Most places require at least two weeks notice/paid service prior to termination and will provide you with two weeks notice. Some schools require enrollment for the entire school year.)

59. What do I need to supply (e.g., food, diapers, toys, equipment)?

60. What equipment do you have?
(Ask about specific types of equipment required by your child now and in the future, e.g., cribs, car seats, high chairs, strollers, toys/climbers, computer)

61. Will I be charged for days my child is absent from the program (e.g., illness, vacation)? Yes ☐ No ☐

IX. REFERENCES

62. Please provide me with at least three names of parents of children who have received care from your facility.
(At least one reference should be a parent of a child currently enrolled in the program who is not related to the provider.)

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____



TOUR OF THE CHILD CARE SETTING CHECKLIST

I. PHYSICAL SETTING:

1. Safety

- ☐ Provider is prepared for emergencies.
- ☐ Provider has an emergency response plan, first aid kit, smoke alarms and fire extinguishers.
- ☐ Facility is free of obvious safety hazards.
- ☐ Electrical outlets are safety-capped.
- ☐ Weapons, dangerous tools, medications, and poisons are locked and out of reach of children.
- ☐ Play area is safe.
- ☐ Equipment is age- and stage-appropriate and in good condition.
- ☐ Cushioning material (e.g., mulch, sand, wood chips, pea gravel, mats) is placed in all areas where there is a potential risk of injury to a child falling off a piece of equipment (e.g., climbing equipment, slides, and swings).

2. Cleanliness

- ☐ The facility is clean and free of odor.
- ☐ The bedding is safe, clean, and comfortable and is not used by more than one child unless laundered between uses.

3. Space

- ☐ Things are in order, but not unnaturally so for children.
- ☐ The room does not appear cluttered. Children can easily find toys, books, and other play things.
- ☐ There is enough space for the number of children to play and move about safely and without being crowded.
- ☐ There is sufficient room for the number of things in the room (toys, books, furniture, etc.).

II. NUTRITION

- ☐ The food and beverages served are nutritious and age- and stage-appropriate.
- ☐ Children are offered water regularly.

III. INTERACTION BETWEEN STAFF AND CHILDREN

- ☐ Children are being attended to.
- ☐ Children are actively engaged by the provider or participating in an activity.
- ☐ There are no children wandering around aimlessly.
- ☐ Children and caregivers are obviously comfortable with and show affection for each other.
- ☐ Caregiver makes frequent eye contact with the children.
- ☐ Voice levels are calm and friendly with no yelling, quarreling, or whining.
- ☐ Young children are frequently hugged, held, and in close interaction with the staff.

IV. PHYSICAL CARE OF CHILDREN

- ☐ Children are kept clean.
- ☐ Children's hands are washed after toileting and before and after eating.
- ☐ Mealtimes are unhurried and happy occasions.
- ☐ Children are spoken to in a respectful manner.



TOUR OF THE CHILD CARE SETTING CHECKLIST

V. ACTIVITIES

- ☐ Children seem to feel good about themselves and proud of what they have accomplished.
- ☐ Children are learning self-help skills appropriate to their ages.
- ☐ Children seem to be enjoying their activities. (Activities should be somewhat challenging, but the activity should not cause the child to be overwhelmed or overly frustrated.)
- ☐ The program offers many opportunities to promote children's needs for discovery, exploration, and creative expression, building social skills, and developing a sense of self.
- ☐ There are many different areas that have materials for arts and crafts, science, pretend play, music activities, etc.

VI. RATIOS AND GROUPINGS

- ☐ Group size is age-appropriate.

Recommended Group Sizes:

Age	# in Group
Infant and Toddlers	No more than six or eight children
3-year olds	No more than 12
4- and 5-year olds	No more than 16

- ☐ There is an appropriate number of staff caring for the children (staff-to-child ratios).

Required family day home ratios:

Age	# in Group
Under 16 months	1:4
16 months through 23 months	1:5
Two- through four-years old	1:8
Five- through nine-years old	1:16
10 years and older	No set ratios

Required child day center ratios: *

Under 16 months	1:4
16 months through 23 months	1:5
Two- through four-years old	1:10
Four-years old until eligible to attend public school	1:12
Balance mixed age groups of three-four- and five-year olds	1:14
School age children	1:20

*By regulation, ratios are expected to change on June 1, 2006 to require fewer children per staff member.



PROVIDER RATINGS

PHILOSOPHY OF CHILD CARE AND CHILDREN			
Provider's view of	Appropriate	Some Concern	Inappropriate
Her own role			
Children			
Parental involvement in program			
Children's learning (activities and daily routine)			
PHYSICAL SETTING			
Indoors	Appropriate	Some Concern	Inappropriate
Clean and Safe			
Adequate play equipment			
Nutritious foods			
Ample servings			
Outdoors	Appropriate	Some Concern	Inappropriate
Clean and Safe			
Adequate play equipment			
IMPRESSION OF PROVIDER			
Provider	Suitable	Some Concern	Unsuitable
Personality			
Experience			
Educational background			
Willingness to meet your needs			
COST OF CARE			
Cost of Care	Affordable	Unaffordable	Inappropriate
Weekly rate	\$	\$	
Likely overtime charges	\$	\$	
Activity fees	\$	\$	
What you need to provide	\$	\$	
Does provider report income to the government?	\$	\$	
Costs of all desired meals	\$	\$	
Total cost of complete care	\$	\$	



PROVIDER'S REPORT CARD

AREAS	APPROPRIATE	SOME CONCERN	INAPPROPRIATE	COMMENTS
Child-Provider Relationship: Have the child and the provider developed a close relationship?				
Discipline Practices: Are you comfortable with the type and frequency of discipline used by the provider?				
Educational/Activity Program: Is it age- and stage-appropriate?				
Food and Beverage: Are the child's nutritional needs being met?				
Physical Setting: Is it clean and safe?				
Playground: Is it safe? Is there adequate equipment?				
Relationship: Is the relationship what you want it to be?				



EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION FORM

Name of Child _____

Nickname _____

Parents' Name(s) _____

Telephone Numbers _____ (Work) _____ (Home)

Name and telephone number of person
to contact if parents are not available _____ (Name) _____ (Phone)

Name of physician _____

Physician telephone _____

Hospital telephone _____

Persons authorized to pick up child _____

Persons NOT allowed to pick up child _____

Child's general health _____

Allergies _____

Special needs _____

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Daily report: This does not necessarily need to be included with the "Emergency Contacts," but you should provide information about any significant occurrence since he/she last cared for your child or any upcoming, anticipated changes.

Examples:

- child had a restless night,
- child is congested,
- child is teething,
- family or a special friend is moving,
- parents are expecting a new baby,
- parents are separating,
- major illness or death of someone close to the child,
- a missing or ill pet,
- information about a new pet, etc.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Services

Contact the **Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS)** to:

- Obtain a list of desirable characteristics of child care providers
- Obtain copies of state child care regulations
- Inquire about how standards are enforced
- Obtain a list of licensed providers
- File a complaint about a provider

Contact the **Virginia Department of Social Services** to obtain information about:

- Regulation of child care
- Provider training information

Contact a VDSS Licensing Office to:

- Obtain information about providers you are considering
- Speak to a licensing inspector

Resources

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (VDSS)

Division of Licensing Programs
7 North Eighth Street
Richmond, VA 23219-1849
(804) 726-7154

<http://www.dss.virginia.gov>
Licensing Information Line
Toll Free 1-800-543-7545
(Richmond area only (804) 726-7154)

VIRGINIA CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL NETWORK

1-800-451-1501

Regional Licensing Offices

CENTRAL REGIONAL OFFICE

1604 Santa Rosa Road
Wythe Building, Suite 130
Richmond, VA 23229-5008
(804) 662-9743

EASTERN REGIONAL OFFICE

Pembroke Office Park
Pembroke IV Office Building, Suite 300
Virginia Beach, VA 23462-5496
(757) 491-3990

PENINSULA LICENSING OFFICE

729 Thimble Shoals Blvd.
Oyster Point Park, Building 6,
Suite 6-B
Newport News, VA 23606
(757) 594-7594

NORTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE

170 West Shirley Avenue, Suite 200
Warrenton, VA 20186
(540) 347-6345

FAIRFAX LICENSING OFFICE

11320 Random Hills Road, Suite 200
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 934-1505

VERONA LICENSING OFFICE

P. O. Box 350
68 Dick Huff Lane
Verona, VA 24482-0350
(540) 332-2330

PIEDMONT REGIONAL OFFICE

Commonwealth of Virginia Building
210 Church Avenue, SW, Suite 100
Roanoke, VA 24011-1779
(540) 857-7971

WESTERN REGIONAL OFFICE

190 Patton Street
Abingdon, VA 24210
(276) 676-5490



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Local Departments of Social Services

Refer to your local telephone directory for telephone numbers and addresses, or go to <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/localagency/index.html> to find the address and phone number of your local department of social services.

Additional Resources

Voluntary Registration Contract Agencies

CHILD NUTRITION, INC.

9 North Third Street, Suite 100
Warrenton, VA 22186
(540) 347-3767

CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

116 West Jefferson Street
Charlottesville, VA 22902
(434) 296-4118

MEMORIAL CHILD GUIDANCE CLINIC

5001 West Broad Street, Suite 140
Richmond, VA 23230
(804) 282-5993

NORTHAMPTON COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICES

5432-A Bayside Road
Exmore, VA 23350
(757) 414-0731

Family Day Systems

INFANT/TODDLER FAMILY DAY CARE OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

10560 Main Street, Suite 312
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 352-3449



NOTES



NOTES

Division of Child Care and Development
Virginia Department of Social Services
Richmond, Virginia

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Richmond, Virginia 23219

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